WHIRRAKEE

December 2015

Vol. 36 No. 11

Registered by Australia Post. Publication No. VBH4462

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552.
ISSN 0812-423X

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Office Bearers for 2015 - 2016

President	*vacant*	
Vice President	Alistair White	0419 613 737
Secretary/Public Officer	Matt Comer	0409 162 627
Treasurer	Ben Goonan	

Positions delegated by the Committee

Minute Secretary	Anne Bridley (for general meetings)	
Excursion sub-committee	**John Lindner**, Simon Hay, Richard Goonan	**5448 3406**
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan	
Librarian	**Diana Collier**, Jess Milroy	**5443 0137**
Garden sub-committee	Kerrie Norris, Jess Milroy	
Observations coordinator	Jenny Shield	
Supper coordinators	Alistair White, Jess Milroy	
Hall management sub-committee	**Maurie Lewis**, Rob & Glenise Moors, Ben Goonan	**0407427179**
Whirrakee sub-committee	Sabine Wilkens, Alistair White, John McCallum, Ben Goonan	
Whirrakee contact/editor	Sabine Wilkens e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797
Whirrakee mailing coordinator	Jenny Shield	
Website sub-committee	Ben Goonan, **John McCallum**	**54439347**

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $40; Family $50; Concession: Single $35; Family $40. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $40.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with members sharing their recent natural history observations. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 5:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Diana Collier, Devi Shanty, Simon Hay, John McCallum, Richard Goonan, Karen Thomas, Jess Milroy

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188. To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 36, No. 11, December 2015

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*), which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions should be posted or e-mailed to the editor at least two days prior to the last Wednesday of the month. They will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although space restrictions occasionally require shortening of articles or holding them over till the following edition of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note
My apologies for printing the wrong speaker details for December in the last Whirrakee; the correct speaker is now listed on page 11 and, as usual, he will be preceded by the delicious Christmas dinner, composed of members' contributions on the night (therefore, note the earlier starting time, but this year it is not as early as usual). The following weekend, please consider helping out at the annual hall clean-up on December 12. It is usually a friendly and social event, with a bit of cleaning thrown in. We will not meet again until February and there will also be no January Whirrakee. *The excursion subcommittee has already been hard at work and the full excursion program for 2016 will appear in the first edition of the new year.*
I hope everyone will have an enjoyable Christmas and summer break and I am counting on receiving many interesting photos and observations for the Whirrakee *in the New Year. Thanks to Jenny Shield for collating members' observations of the recent months; see pages 3, 8 and 9.*

Front page photograph:
Joy Clusker took this picture during the Myoporaceae ID night, presented by Matthew Comer. Some plants that were dealt with on the night (including their names) are shown on page 7.

Short Notices

Naturalist workshop wrap-up
by Ben Goonan

The Club's first workshop, "Identifying Local Frogs by their Calls", presented by Ben Goonan was a great success with 12 participants listening to, learning about and discussing local frog, their calls, identification and distribution/habitat. The hands-on, or ears on, practical nature of the workshop, with recordings of all local frogs being played (and replayed) allowed the more experienced participants to refine their skills and the less so received a great introduction. While many of our local frogs have quite distinct calls, others are more similar and easily confused. Being able to play and re-play their calls, and discuss what you are hearing, is a valuable learning experience for all. Along with listening to calls, participants also had the written description available to further enhance their recall and recognition.
A fantastic outcome of the workshop was the establishment of an informal 'frog group'. The intent of the group is to share observations of frog activity, interesting sightings and other froggy stuff. You can join us also - just email Matt to get involved. We are particularly interested in hearing about areas where many species are found together. Do you know where more than six species can be heard calling together? Also, if you are out and about and see lots of frog activity on the roads, let us know, we'd love to hear about it asap.
Keep an eye out in *Whirrakee* next year to see what's on, we are planning to organise interesting, diverse and practical skills based workshops.

Supper contributions
Thanks to the very nice people, who have organised supper after the general meetings this year. It was a pleasant activity, which allowed lots of post-meeting conversations. For those who haven't contributed to this, you might like to bring something along next year.

December general meeting
The December general meeting will once again begin with a shared dinner, followed by a presentation by John Robinson about his Square tailed kite project.
Importantly, the hall will be in use by the regular dance group prior to our meeting. **It is asked that our club members not arrive at the hall until 6.30pm** so we don't interrupt the dance group session. This means our meal will begin a little later than the traditional time (see back page for more detail).

Annual Hall Cleanup: The annual hall cleanup will be held on Saturday 12th December at 9.30am. It involves a general spring clean of the Hall including removing cobwebs, cleaning fridge, windows, dusting etc. There may be some gardening too. Please bring any cleaning equipment you may find useful, and some morning tea.

Matt Comer

Members' observations recorded at July 8, 2015 meeting
Submitted by Jenny Shield

Karen Thomas May and June 2015
Tannery Lane, Mandurang:
Powerful Owl calls

Members' observations recorded at August 12, 2015 meeting
Submitted by Jenny Shield

Keith Graham (per Anne Bridley) 9 August 2015 Arnold Street: A pair of Banded Lapwings and 3 chicks.

Anne Bridley 11 August 2015 at 3.30pm Central Bendigo: Barn Owl harassed by Little Ravens and Magpies
10 August 2015, Big Tree Site, just south of Ellesmere Break, Wellsford Forest: Scarlet, Flame, Red-Capped Robins and one Hooded Robin.

John Robinson 8 August 2015, Strathfieldsaye: White-plumed Honeyeaters mating.

Continued on page 8...

Things with wings

Left: A juvenile Peregrine Falcon photographed by Simon Smith on Tennyson Road, just south of Tennyson (near Lockington) at the end of October.

Below: The two kingfishers (right) that worked to excavate the branch at its bend (left), photographed by Glenise Moors to go with Glenise's observation on page 9.

There are lots of butterflies hatched at Skydancers in Barkers Creek recently. It is free to have a look and take photos, these ones are by Joy Clusker.
Left: Wanderer, *Danaus plexippus*,
Below: Probably the Common Egg Fly, *Hypolimnas bologna*

The smaller things…

Left: White female Daisy Flower Spider *Zygometis lactea* on Blue Dampiera on ridge near site of Sandner's Eucalyptus distillery (photographer: Michael Barkla)

Below left: Yellow female Daisy Spider on Sticky Everlasting at old gravel extraction site near the Epsom sewage treatment plant (photographer: Jenny Shield). Michael Barkla has seen about 12 female Daisy Flower Spiders in the past month in the Eaglehawk/Whipstick area, but no males yet. The body length of the males is only 2.5 mm but they have very long front two pairs of legs for their body size.

Above right: Blue Forester Moth on Sticky Everlasting, at gravel extraction site (photographer: Jenny Shield)

Below right: Grass Flower Spider *Runcinia acuminata* on Clustered Everlasting (photographer Michael Barkla).

Below: How perfect is this trapdoor spider home, seen during the November Family Nature Club excursion (photo by Joy Clusker)

Ant Freeway: On the morning of November 19, Karen Thomas was entertained by ants on her property and wondered where they were heading off to… to her surprise, she found that they were travelling along a well worn path 100m long and 10 cm wide to a second nest . Ant freeway !!!!

1. The Ant

2. The Nest

3. The Freeway

4. The Second Nest

Myoporaceae workshop with Matt Comer

Photos by Joy Clusker

Left: *Eremophila divaricata* (Spreading Emu Bush)

Right: *Myoporum parvifolium* (Creeping Boobialla)

Below left: *Eremophila longifolia* (Berrigan)

Below right: *Eremophila gibbifolia* (coccid emu bush)

This was another successful workshop. Look out for more workshop announcements in the future…a great way to learn.

...continued from page 3

Marian Hill
White-Plumed Honeyeaters nest every month of the year.

Matthew Comer 12 August 2015, Fosterville: Pair of Pied Butcherbirds seen along Goornong-Axedale Road a few times recently. Matt has also seen significant numbers of Crimson Rosellas in Central Victoria recently.

John McCallum Axedale:
Fan-tailed Cuckoo

Vanessa Richardson
White-winged Choughs building a nest

Lyn Hamilton BFN Club Rooms
Brown Thornbill

Bev Culvenor 10 August 2015, Kennington Reservoir: A pair of Wood Ducks at a hollow in the bole of a tree 1m off the ground

P. & J. Land, August, Neilborough/Kamarooka Forest: Lots of honeyeaters in the *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* trees. Nine species of honeyeater.
Also on 7 August 2015, a flock of about 12 Swift Parrots along Clays Road near Noble Road, Kamarooka. Musk and Little Lorikeets, too.

Jess Milroy 9 August 2015, Sedgwick – Sutton Grange Road
White-browed babblers shuffling around in the leaves on the roadside,
Flowering Sundews in the Pilchers Bridge Forest

Members' observations recorded at September 9, 2015 meeting

Submitted by Jenny Shield

Colin Thomas Late August 2015, Mandurang South: White Throated Warbler male, singing and sighted
Golden Moth Orchids

Anne Bridley 6 September 2015, Spring Gully
A Wedge-Tailed eagle flew over home. About a week before, a Little Eagle flew over, which is much more common than a Wedgie.

Karen Thomas, Devi Shanti, Kerrie Norris, Maurie Lewis 9 September 2015, Spring Gully Reservoir Reserve: Crested Bellbird calling a lot. Also heard it in the same vicinity on 26 August.
White-browed Babblers, x2 and numerous roosts. Dusky Wood-swallows and nest. Black Wallabies x2,
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Red-throated Honeyeater and wattlebird, Sugar Glider in box x2, Bearded Dragon, Morels (fungi) at Mandurang.

Maurie Lewis September 2015, Diamond Hill: Brown Snake about 4ft 6ins long.

Members' observations recorded at October 14, 2015 meeting

Submitted by Jenny Shield

Vanessa Richardson September/October 2015, Whipstick: Pair of spoonbills feeding on the dam. Only ever seen alone previously.
Choughs built 3 mud nests this season and laid eggs (hatched this week) in the last nest built. All 3 nests built within an area of 20 square metres.

Matt Comer 1 October 2015, Goornong:
One pair of blue winged parrots observed briefly passing through.
One pair of Black-faced Cuckoo Shrikes collecting wool from tree trunks for nest material.

John Robinson 21 October 2015, Violet Street: Green Finch, heard only.

Anne Bridley 8 October 2015 approximately, Spring Gully: one Western Gerygone heard for the first time for my place
13 October 2015 (approx.), Spring Gully:
A group of presumably White-browed Honeyeaters (too far away for positive identification, foraging overhead.

Lyndal Rowley 14 October 2015, Violet Street: Koel heard, first call for the season.

Cynthia & Rob Watkins October 2015, Marnie Road: Bird nest blown down, young killed.
October 2015, , Terrick Terrick National Park 35 species seen. Red capped robins plentiful in vicinity of cemetery. Diamond Fire-tail Finches nesting. A former Wedge Tailed Eagle's nest now occupied by a Peregrine Falcon rearing three chicks. A Willy wag-tail made life difficult for the Peregrine, even landing on its back.

Pam Land October 2015, dam on private property, Neilborough: Black-fronted Dotterels with 3 eggs on stones on dam bank.

John Lindner October 2015, 5 Ross Street, White Hills: Eastern Rosella sitting on eggs in backyard box on a pole. Male and female routines readily observable.
Mudlark: two almost ready-to-fledge young in mud nest on Yellow Gum in the street.
Little Raven: one fledged young raised in a nest high in a Sugar Gum. Chick now on the ground, adults in attendance.

Members' observations recorded at November 11, 2015 meeting

Submitted by Jenny Shield

Gemma Candy 6 November 2015, Castlemaine Botanic Gardens bushland:
A large white moth on a *Bursaria spinosa* looking freshly emerged (wings slightly crumpled). Walking back past about 1.5 hours later, it was in the same spot, but with another moth attached (mating). Took a photo and looked it up. It appears to be *Pinara divisa* of which there are at least 3 similar Victorian species currently referred to as *Pinara divisa*. Male and female are quite different.

Glenise Moors 3 November 2015, Sedgwick:
While walking in Greater Bendigo N.P. Rob and I observed a pair of Sacred Kingfishers taking turns flying at a bend in a branch as they worked on excavating a nesting hollow. Luckily, one was more brightly coloured than the other so I was able to note that they appeared to share the difficult job (see photos on page 4).

5 November 2015, Sedgwick
When our small dam had a low water level, it was quite noisy with froglets and some Peron's Tree Frogs. We received 71mm of rain, which almost filled the dam and that evening we heard several Pobblebonk Frogs calling loudly. They seemed to have been stimulated by the deeper water. Within a few days there were nine clumps of frog spawn.

I hadn't seen or heard Eastern Yellow Robins along the water channel for several years, but for the last few months, I occasionally thought I heard one calling. Last week I saw one and heard another. Another species found recently was a Crested Shrike-tit. Still haven't noticed any white-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes. They used to be regularly present.

John Lindner 10 November 2015, 5 Ross Street, White Hills: Eight Long-billed Corellas feeding on unripe seeds of Cootamundra Wattle (*Acacia baileyana*), sitting at the top of a dense canopy of the trees. Notable that they were very quiet, compared to usually being nervous, edgy and "talkative".

Jane Cleary November 2015, daily, Goynes Road, Epsom: Pair of Galahs, trimming small pieces from a Cootamundra Wattle. There seems no evidence of them feeding on seed pods, just ripping short pieces off and dropping them on to the ground. Are they just troubled birds?

The tough life of a soil crust

Going to Canberra in December?

Natalie Maras' soil crust-inspired sculptures and drawings will be on show during the *Interface* exhibition at the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra from 11 November to 6 December 2015. See: https://blog.csiro.au/the-tough-life-of-a-soil-crust/

Reproduced from an article by Andrea Wild 10th Nov 2015..."Don't assume when you look out on an empty bit of land that there's nothing there," says Natalie Maras, artist in residence at the Australian National Herbarium, one of CSIRO's natural history collections. What is out there are soil crusts, communities of living organisms, like plants, fungi and lichens, that form a crust over the soil. Soil crusts anchor the soil in place, provide a home to critters and convert raw materials into forms more accessible by plants. Such assemblages represent the perfect material for artists with a botanical bent and Natalie has developed an affinity with the subjects of her artistic residency. "Soil crusts live at the interface of soil and air. They exist between two worlds, like the artist working in science. Unacknowledged, unrecognised, unknown, they perform a vital creative function. Their story is my story.

The Feather Map

The Feather Map of Australia aims to collect waterbird feathers from wetlands around Australia. These feathers will be analysed for stable isotopes and mineral elements that are incorporated into feathers through food. These analyses will identify the differences in feathers from different parts of Australia, creating a Feather Map.

The Feather Map will be used to track the movement of waterbirds around Australia from wetland to wetland based on the stable isotope and mineral elements in the feathers. This project is an Australian first and provides a new method of tracking waterbirds without the need for capturing birds.

https://www.ecosystem.unsw.edu.au/content/rivers-and-wetlands/wetland-ecology-and-stable-isotopes/feather-map-of-australia

Darren Le Roux and colleagues on nest boxes for hollow-nesting birds

"Large trees support unique habitat structures (e.g. hollows) that form over centuries and cannot be provided by small trees. Large trees are also declining in human-modified landscapes worldwide. One restoration strategy gaining popularity involves adding nest boxes to smaller trees to replicate natural hollows. However, limited empirical research has tested how hollow-nesting fauna responds to the presence of nest boxes. We asked: can the addition of nest boxes increase tree visitation by hollow-nesting birds? We conducted a before-after control-impact (BACI) experiment using 144 nest boxes and 96 sample trees comprised of three sizes (small [20–50 cm dbh], medium [51–80 cm], and large [>80 cm]) and located in four landscape contexts (reserves, pasture, urban parklands, and urban built-up areas). We recorded a significant increase in hollow-nesting bird abundance and richness at large trees after nest box additions. However, the same response was not observed at medium, small, or control trees. We also recorded non-significant increases in hollow-nesting bird abundance and richness at trees in modified landscapes after nest box additions compared to trees in reserves and control trees. Our results suggest that adding nest boxes to smaller-sized trees may not attract hollow-nesting birds. Therefore, nest box management strategies may require re-evaluation as it is often assumed that hollow supplementation will attract hollow-using fauna and sufficiently ameliorate the loss of large, hollow-bearing trees. We advocate that large tree retention remains crucial and should be prioritized. Large trees could be effective target structures for habitat restoration, especially in modified landscapes."

Ref: Le Roux, D.S., Ikin, K., Lindenmayer, D.B., Bistricer, G., Manning, A.D., Gibbons, P. 2015. Enriching small trees with artificial nest boxes cannot mimic the value of large trees for hollow-nesting birds, Restoration Ecology, doi: 10.1111/rec.12303. http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/rec.12303/abstract

Diary

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday, December 9 **6.30pm**
Christmas Function (thus an earlier start).
Please bring a dish to share, sweet or savoury, and bring your own drinks. After the meal, listen to our final speaker of our 70th anniversary year, John Robinson, who will tell us about his Square-tailed Kite research (see also page 3, re: starting time).

Wednesday, February 9 **7.30pm**
First meeting for 2016.

Annual Hall Cleanup,
Saturday December 12 **9.30am**
The annual hall cleanup will be held on Saturday 12th December at 9.30am. It involves a general spring clean of the Hall including removing cobwebs, cleaning fridge, windows, dusting etc. There may be some gardening too. Please bring any cleaning equipment you may find useful, and some morning tea.

Family Nature Club
The Nature Club activities will continue in 2015, so look out for announcements or check out their website.
Registration:
Bendigonatureclub@gmail.com or 5443-1326
http://bendigofamilynatureclub.blogspot.com/

Bendigo Native Plant Group meeting.
All interested people are welcome to come along. Meeting starts at 7:30pm on the third Tuesday of the month, Golden Square Senior Citizens Hall.
The next meeting is on the 15th December.

Advance Notice – the date for the 2016 Autumn SEANA camp is 8-10 April (Host: Geelong FNC, location to be announced)

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.
WRIN meetings held on the 1st Saturday of the month at 1pm the Golden Square Senior Citizens Hall

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Australian Naturalists Network
The ANN Get-Together for 2016 (ANN16) will be held in Western Australia and hosted by the WA Naturalists' Club.
Please contact the ANN 2016 Committee and the secretary Margaret Larke by email at ANN16@wanaturalists.org.au; mlarke@iinet.net.au for more information.

Celebrate Bendigo's Bushland Stories
There is sure to be one familiar to you…with guest speaker Bill Garner. Tuesday December 15, Goldfield's Library, 7.00-8.30pm. Drinks and nibbles provided. RSVP to Yasmin Kelsall at vnpa@vnpa.org.au OR Phone: (03) 9347 5188

Flora and Fauna of the Victorian and South Australian Mallee
A new guide to Flora & Fauna of the Mallee (mainly flora) by has recently been launched by Jocelyn Lindner. There is thirty years of work in it and it is more substantial at 266 pages than most of such guides. Well worth getting! 310 indigenous Mallee plant species
43 introduced species (weeds)
102 fauna and birds
Chapters on propagation, food and medicinal plants, remnant vegetation, the Mallee after fire and highway & roadside vegetation
What's in flower when? – a unique tool for identifying commonly observed Mallee plants
$40. Postage is $15 for 1 or 2 copies. Order at http://kowplains.com/books-for-sale/
Information: Jocelyn Lindner
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